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30 May 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Associate Deputy Director for
Intelligence

SUBJECT: : IC Staff Investigation of a COINS
File of Community Research and
Reports Underway

1. This memorandum responds to your request
for a paper on this subject.

2. On 18 May, [] (CIA COINS Subsystem
Manager) was contacted by [], a member of
[]'s group, IC Staff, regarding the
feasibility of establishing a COINS file consisting
of a listing of the Community's planned production
of finished intelligence. He stated the proposed
purpose of the file would be to monitor/prevent
duplicative and inappropriate production.
Inappropriate production was defined as State
publishing a piece that should have been done by
DIA.

3. Bob advised him that as he saw it, the
major problems in implementing such a scheme
involved selling the idea, obtaining interagency
management approval and cooperation, working out
the procedures for having the information trans-
mitted to a central point, and lastly, organizing
and presenting the data. He was told that COINS

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did not appear to be a practical vehicle for disseminating the data and that the Colonel should think in terms of a publication if he could overcome the other hurdles. [] wanted to pursue the COINS idea, so Bob gave him the COINS Project Manager's name [] and phone number.

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4. On 25 May, Bob was recontacted by [] who had gotten an enthusiastic reception from []. The Colonel stated that [] was interested in going the COINS route and that the Colonel was interested in talking to a technician regarding the data elements that should be entered in such a file. He commented that he liked the AEGIS data elements. He emphasized that the idea was still in the thinking stage and it should be played low key. Bob told him he would have someone get in touch with him the following week.

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5. This is a typical COINS file proposal--not thought through and based on the false assumption that an on-line file updated daily is always better than anything less sophisticated. In my view, [] approach is reasonable. Many questions need to be answered before we worry about how to build such a file. Whether or not a machine file is needed and what kind of machine file would be best ought to be at the tail end of the systems design process.

6. The most important question is, "Does the DCI want the IC Staff or anybody else to ride herd on what kinds of projects and research efforts are in process in what parts of which agencies?" If the answer is "yes," the next step is to have the DCI issue and make stick

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an order to that effect. The order should specify the objectives for a reporting system and should specify an executive agent to build and maintain the system. The order, presumably, would also have to deal with how to handle sensitive information and with who will have access to what parts of the information in the system.

7. With these questions answered, the executive agent can begin to design a data gathering system and a format for the particular information to be included for each item in the file. When these chores are completed, an indexing scheme, a filing system and production process can be rationally approached. This is the point at which the use of machine files should be considered. If the IC Staff (or some other small group) is to monitor production, an on-line computer system (theoretically providing instant access to many many people) is altogether unnecessary. A paper file in the office of the executive agent would be more secure, more convenient and far more inexpensive. If the data are to be widely available, a paper publication that can be read by many managers at their desks would be far more convenient than a terminal located at one point or at the few points within a given agency. Under the first assumption, COINS would spread the data far too broadly. Under the latter assumption and using COINS, CRS would end up querying the COINS file and xeroxing many copies for the interested managers. The utility of a COINS file is not apparent to me for any assumed organization with a defined responsibility in this area.

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8. In accord with our conversation, []
[] will do nothing until [] returns
to him. [] will then send the Colonel to
me. I will indicate lack of willingness to
put forth any effort for the project until the
questions of "for whom?" and "for what?" are
resolved. We will, of course, be very polite
and I will not tell [] that he may not
talk with the resident expert []
but [] will be instructed to minimize
her efforts should [] contact her. I could
also suggest that [] should talk to []
about how to keep track without involving computers
or very much else in the way of bureaucratic
overhead.

[]

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